



Habitats

Mississippi River; Missouri River; interior rivers and streams

Iowa Status

common; native

Iowa Range

western one-third and eastern half of Iowa

Bibliography

Iowa Department of Natural Resources. 2001.
Biodiversity of Iowa: Aquatic Habitats CD-ROM.

shovelnose sturgeon

Scaphirhynchus platyrhynchus

Kingdom: Animalia
Division/Phylum: Chordata - vertebrates
Class: Osteichthyes
Family: Acipenseriformes
Order: Acipenseridae

Features

Bony plates along the back, a forked tail, and a flat head in the shape of a shovel all are characteristic traits of a shovelnose. The body is brown on the back and sides with a white belly. Four fringed barbels (whisker-like projections) are present on the chin near the sucking-type mouth. A shovelnose sturgeon's average weight is 1 1/2 to two pounds. The state record weighed 12 pounds and was 33 inches long. The skeleton is mainly cartilage.

Natural History

The shovelnose sturgeon lives on a gravel or sand bottom in the open channels of large rivers. It eats insect larvae (particularly flies and caddisflies), using its flexible sucking mouth to pull them in. It is capable of reproducing when it reaches a length of 20 to 25 inches (age five to seven years). Larger females deposit about 50,000 eggs over a gravel or rock bottom in the open channel of a large river. Spawning occurs April through June. Females do not spawn every year.